

W. A. Dent

THE LAY-MAN'S MAGAZINE.

"THOU SHALT LOVE THE LORD THY GOD WITH ALL THY HEART, WITH ALL THY SOUL, AND WITH ALL THY MIND—AND THY NEIGHBOUR AS THYSELF."

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As Good Friday is approaching, we deem it not improper to present to our readers some reflections on

CALVARY :

The mount of agony, blackness and woe : The mount around which congregated every terror within the conception of pandemonium :—On which, in lurid lightnings, fell the full blast of vengeance : against which beat the very choice thunderbolts of Jehovah.

Behold the scene—

The God, at whose command, creation rose from nothing, and Chaos gathered form ; who, seated on the throne of eternal rule, wielded the sceptre of universal dominion ;—He there hangs expiring : Above, the hosts of seraphim and cherubim, gazing in silent astonishment ; their golden harps, still as the grave ; no song—no alleluia, among them all : Below—the troops of Hell, with joy and in triumph, hastening to behold their conqueror die :

The Pharisees, with countenances of malignity, taunting and urging on his torment :

A mob like multitude with shouts and curses :

Such is the scene presented by this awful mount :

Such are the attendants and the causes of our Saviour's sufferings :

But, worst of all—his Father, He in whose bosom he had dwelt from all eternity, now hides his face from him ; now pours forth upon his soul all the fierceness of his most tremendous wrath. The torments of damnation itself he feels in tenfold intensity.

And why is this? For the salvation of such ungrateful, depraved, wicked rebels as we are—To save us

from perdition—To deliver us from the flames of hell.

Stupendous sight!—A God suffering for the redemption of his worshippers :—A creator, for the good of his creatures ; and suffering, not only agony and ignominy, but death and the torments of the damned.

Oh ! our souls, how can ye fail to give every hour to the service of such a Being : Consecrate every energy, every moment, to Him : Be loud and faithful in his praises :—with every day, renew your adoration, with every night, your wondering worship,

For, oh ! eternity's too short,
To utter all his praise.

And think you, sin is not most heinous in its nature ; most black, most hell-deserving, when it could thus cause the death of God himself ;—when nothing but Infinity could atone for it. Had sin been trifling in its nature and effects, Gabriel, or some other angelic intelligence, could have wrought our redemption—His suffering would then have been sufficient.

But see God himself descending to our clay, taking upon him our nature, and in the most ignominious manner dying for our salvation. Let us loath transgression as the most horrible Beelzebub—That it was crucified our Lord and Master.

When in the counsels of eternity it was foreknown, that man would sin, then did Christ Jesus, the second person in the God-head, offer himself an atoning sacrifice. When this was known in Heaven, profound astonishment reigned throughout : In silent adoration the celestial hosts pondered the mighty thought : It filled their

minds: It suspended their songs. At length, bursting the speechless trance, an universal alleluia rose, and in increasing swells filled whole Heaven with melody; seraph vied with seraph; who should breathe the sweetest praises;—cherub with cherub, who should sweep the loudest chord. In one unbounded anthem rose the harmony from that vast choir of myriad voices which surround the throne on high.

When Adam, in evil moment, broke the law of his God; when he, by disobedience, bid defiance to the thunders of Jehovah; then in mercy, in infinite compassion, did he vouchsafe a promise on which the soul might repose with hope—

The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpents head. This comforted man in his misery, brightened the eye of his affliction, smoothed the pillow of death, and gave his soul at parting from the warm precincts of earthly affection, a blissful hope of Heavenly happiness. But for this, despair would have ruled our early ancestors. Bowed down with the weight of their guilt, without a ray to cheer their gloom, they would have groaned out their lives of woe, in black and bitter intensity of wretchedness.

To his people the Saviour from time to time revealed himself, in continually increasing light and favor: Thus with Enoch, he communed much and often: To Seth, he made known his love—Brighter and brighter grew the revelation; stronger and stronger the assurance of rest beyond the grave. Even amid the idolatries and debaucheries of the old world, he had a few chosen ones, who were the recipients of his peculiar bounty;—whose souls, day by day, bore a willing testimony against the surrounding wickedness; and finally, Noah, the preacher of righteousness, till the last Antediluvian day, received revelations from Immanuel; was blessed

with converse on high.

From the moment when the Ark rested on Ararat, until the time of his Advent, Jesus revealed himself more and more, by dreams, by visions, by prophecies—The heavenly light, around the path of humanity, grew brighter and brighter: The consolations of affliction, grew richer and richer: Patriarch after Patriarch, gained a degree higher in the ascent of the spiritual Pisgah: Prophet after Prophet, poured a brighter broader flood of radiance along the moral horizon. Enough was seen, enough was felt, to animate and cheer: enough was known to invigorate and strengthen. The world basked in brighter glories, as age succeeded age.

At length Immanuel came. He came the son of poverty. Born amid the very climax of beggary. A manger for his cradle; his companions the Ox and the Ass; his mansion the stable. But though thus he appeared to mortal vision, Heaven surrounded that ignominy with profound adoration: Cherubim and Seraphim came thronging from their seats on high, to adore and wonder: To gaze at the incarnate God: To see the condescension of infinity: Yes, around him celestial myriads dwelt unseen. Odours from the bowers above, filled the air, though unperceived by earthly organs.

From the manger, see our blessed Saviour entering on a course of dutiful obedience to earthly parents—accommodating his God-head to their poverty—humble and child-like!—wonderful! astonishing! A sight more calculated to arouse admiration, than the instant transformation of our earth into Heaven—our huts into palaces perfect diamond—Our rocks into pearls—our dust into gold. Stupendous phenomenon! God, whose creative power, knows no bound; whose energy fills eternal duration with unnumbered universes.—He con-

descends to obey a frail man ; yields himself to the dictates of a weak woman.

Thundering at will with all the tremendous horrors of the very arcana of eternal vengeance—The creator of pandemonium itself—Armies of angels waiting his nod—Myriads of powers ready to start around at his call. Able to create with a breath multitudes of beings, the might of each of which should transcend that of the universal family of mortals. Still does he bear taunts, insults, injuries : Still does he humbly walk our earth—driven from mountain to plain, from plain to river, from the sea to the wilderness by his worm-like enemies—'Tis more than intelligence, throughout eternity, can admire

See the Jews, from time to time, threatening to kill him—See them refusing him a home—See them numbering him with the dogs of their flock. And still, how does he treat them ? How does he return their revilings ? By compassion—by love—by bearing their burdens—by healing their sicknesses—by feeding them when starving—giving them reason when deranged—bestowing sight to the dim eye—soundness to the withered limb—beauty to the faded cheek—Sunshine to the gloomy heart—Peace to the mourning soul—Life to the buried body. For evil, he restored them joy ; for taunts, he gave them blessings, richer than the dew to the herb, or the sun to the rose.

See him, in the Gethsemane garden—The angel of death putting to his lip the full cup of damnation's misery—The very dregs of Hell's fierce potion. On his head are poured the vial's blazing vengeance. In his soul is the sting of agony, such as never before was known. And then no comfort had he ; no friend, no angel, giving the chalice of peace ; no Gabriel, to bear a branch from the bowers of bliss, created by himself. All was the intensity of the very es-

sence of horror, blankness and agony. Hell rejoiced—Jehovah suffered.—

Behold the tribunal before which the God-head is arraigned—And where is that tribunal ? Who is he shall try the God of Heaven ? What power, more than Omnipotent, can challenge his actions ? What thunders, tremendous in majesty, can beat back his bolts ? What energies, shall tear from his brow, the diadem eternal ; from his breast the shield Infinity ; from his hand the sceptre eternally universal ? His is the glory, whence emanates all light. His the Being, permitting every thing to be. Can any greater, brighter, holier than Him be found ?

But who is his judge ?

A vassal of a nation of murderers—a governor appointed by the captain of a band of robbers—a Roman subject ! Oh Rome, illustrious indeed is thy fate, that before thy fasces has bowed the God of Heaven. That at thy bar was arraigned the majesty of Eternity. Brighter, bolder grandeur, might thou, in thy depravity, have claimed for this, than for all thy victors, cars and arches, than for all thy empires vanquished, kingdoms led captive. More than for the exploits of thy Cæsars, Scipios and Pompeys ; The wisdom of thy Catos, the patriotism of thy Brutus, or eloquence of thy Tully.

Such and so great was the abasement of Him who died that we might live.—Tho' God, he vouchsafed to the form of a trial. He condescended to an earthly tribunal—Tho' Almighty, he stood as a criminal at the bar of a worm of the dust—Tho' the ruler of the hosts of Heaven, he obeyed the mandate of a subaltern on earth.

Buffeted, spit upon and scourged ; mocked, crowned with thorns, insulted with vile insignia ;—he opened not his mouth. As a lamb was he mild and gentle—no opposition, no resistance. By a word of his lips could he have annihilated Rome and

the world—But he chose to suffer that his Redeemed ones might live.

Such, my readers, was the goodness of Him, whose Gospel is professed by you. Him, whose Bible is on your shelves, by many of you neglected: by some of you, trifled with. These were the sufferings which purchased redemption for us. The crime of our race was committed against an Infinite God—therefore an Infinite Being alone had power to atone for it—no one short of Jesus could work out our salvation. But for these ignominies in him, our vile, depraved, rebellious race, would have gone unbroken to perdition: there, for myriads of millions of inconceivable duration, to plunge with whirlwind wing down the gulph of agony, damnation and woe.

Jesus Christ stood in our stead—He stood as our representative. In our place did he suffer. All this misery, with eternity added to it, was our due. He bared his bosom to the storm divine, and thus delivered his people. On his head the thunders of Almighty vengeance spent their rage—around his brow the lightnings of Infinite wrath blazed and blasted. In his soul the sting of agony was borne—His holy heart became shrouded in the gloom of that curse, which else, we must have endured. He bore the absence of light and peace and joy, deepened by every horror that could make that absence tremendous. Hell was permitted to pour its scalding malignity into his cup; instead of ours.

And, oh! who is brute enough to sin against this Saviour?—who has enough of the demon within him, to be ungrateful to this Immanuel?—Remember Christ died only for those who seek Him. To those who neglect his commands, and despise his Gospel, damnation still remains.—For his people he suffered—and who

are his people? All who seek him, as he has commanded, all who give themselves to his guidance, endeavoring to form and fashion their conduct according to the directions of his holy word. But those who despise his Sabbaths and his sanctuaries; those who wilfully break his laws; those who neither pray to him nor praise him—they have no interest in his death.

Finally, draws nigh the Infinite climax; the era in the career of eternity: the centre of everlasting—For which ages had been preparing, and the effects of which millions of ages will celebrate. Oh! language, thou hast not power to pourtray this hour.

Between Heaven and Earth hangs the creator of the Universe—like a criminal beggar—no friend to solace, not a comfort to cheer—In the midst of the triumphant malignities of Hell, Earth groans beneath her weight—Riving in horror, her rocks, by ages bound in adamant bands, attest the suffering God—The bones of the charnel house rise wondering, from their rest and dust, whose sleep sepulchral, thousands of years had witnessed, gathers form, and bursting its clods, walks abroad with new life. Clouds and blackness cover the splendors of meridian day—The sun hides his beams in a veil, not daring to look upon the scene.

On high, archangel, hierarch and potentate, gaze speechless, mourning, a tear bedims the brightness of their glory—a groan startles the vaults of Heaven—Hell's vast concave rings with peal on peal of shouting exultation.

The father's sword, rebathed in Heaven, flames with vengeance as it pierces the heart of the Son—of our Immanuel—

'Tis done—Jehovah dies!

Lay-Man's Magazine.

Martinsburgh, March 21.

The blood of the martyrs was the seed of the Church. The Gospel spread more and more. A number of Apostolical persons demonstrated by their conduct, that the spirit which had influenced the Apostles, rested upon them. Filled with divine charity, they distributed their substance to the poor, and travelled into regions, which as yet, had not heard the sound of the Gospel; and having planted the faith, they ordained other persons as pastors, committing to them the culture of the Gospel, and passed themselves to other countries. Trajan died in 117, and under Adrian and Antoninus Pius his successors, the persecution ceased.

JUSTIN MARTYR.

This great man was born at Neapolis, in Samaria, anciently called Sichem. His father was a Gentile, probably one of the Greeks, belonging to the colony transplanted thither, who gave his son a philosophical education: In his youth he travelled for the improvement of his understanding, and Alexandria afforded him all the entertainment which an inquisitive mind could derive from the fashionable studies. The Stoics appeared to him, at first, the masters of happiness. He gave himself up to one of this sect, till he found he could learn nothing from him of the nature of God. He next betook himself to a Peripatetic, whose anxious desire of settling the price of his instructions, convinced Justin that truth did not dwell with him. A Pythagorean next engaged his attention, who requiring of him the previous knowledge of music, astronomy and geometry, dismissed him for the present, when he understood he was unfurnished with those studies. In much solicitude he applied himself to a Platonic philoso-

pher, with a more plausible appearance of success than from any of the foregoing. He now gave himself to retirement. As he was walking near the sea, he was met by an aged person of a venerable appearance, whom he beheld with much attention. Do you know me? says he: when Justin answered in the negative, he asked him why he surveyed him with so much attention? I wondered, says he to find any person here. The stranger observed, that he was waiting for some domestics; but what brought you here, says he? Justin professed his love of private meditation; the other hinted at the absurdity of mere speculation abstracted from practice; which gave occasion to Justin to express his ardent desire of knowing God, and to expatiate on the praises of philosophy. The stranger by degrees endeavored to cure him of his ignorant admiration of Plato and Pythagoras, and to point out to him the writings of the Hebrew prophets, as being much more ancient than any of those called philosophers, and led him to some view of christianity, in its nature and in its evidences, adding "above all things, pray that the gates of light may be opened to thee; for they are not discernible, nor to be understood by all, except God and his Christ give to a man to understand." The man having spoken these things and much more, left me, says Justin, directing me to pursue these things, and I saw him no more. Immediately a fire was kindled in my soul, and I had a strong affection for the prophets and those men who are the friends of Christ, and weighing within myself his words, I found this to be the only sure philosophy.

He became a christian. This was under the reign of Adrian.

Coming to Rome in the time of Antoninus Pius, he there wrote a confutation of the heretics.

About the year 110, he published his excellent apology for the christians, addressed to Antoninus Pius, which may be reasonably supposed to have had a considerable influence on the political conduct of that prudent emperor, with respect to the christians.

Not long after his first Apology, Justin left Rome, and went to Ephesus, where he had his discourse with Trypho the Jew, the substance of which is still preserved to us.

On his return to Rome, he had frequent contests with Crescens the philosopher, a man equally remarkable for malignity to christians and for the most horrid vices. Justin now presented his second apology to Marcus Antoninus Philosophus, the successor of Antoninus Pius, and a determined enemy to christians.—He was in hopes of softening his mind toward the christians, as he had done that of his predecessor, but in vain.—Marcus was their enemy during his whole reign, and they scarcely ever had an enemy more implacable.—The immediate occasion of the Second Apology was this, as he himself relates:

“A certain woman at Rome had, together with her husband, lived in extreme profligacy and licentiousness. But on her conversion to christianity, being changed herself, she endeavored to persuade her husband also to imitate her example, representing to him the punishment of eternal fire, which in a future state would be inflicted on the disobedient. But he persisting in his wickedness, she was induced to wish for a separation.—By the advice of her friends she continued however to live with him, hoping in time he might be brought to repentance. Upon his coming to Alexandria, he proceeded to greater lengths of wickedness, so that, finding the connection now no longer tolerable, she procured a divorce from him. He, not impressed with

the happy change which had taken place in her dispositions, and unmoved with her compassionate attempts to rescue him from ruin, accused her of being a christian. Upon which she presented a petition, to you O Emperor, that she might have time to dispose and regulate her household affairs, and after that promised to answer to the charge, which petition you granted. The husband finding his wife to have gained a respite from his malice, directed it to another object, to one Ptolemy, who had instructed her in christianity, and who had been punished by Urbicius the prefect of Rome. He persuaded a centurion, his friend, to imprison Ptolemy and ask him whether he was a christian. He, no flatterer or dissembler, ingenuously confessed, and was a long time punished with imprisonment. At last, when he was brought before Urbicius, and asked only this question, whether he was a christian, he confessed himself a teacher of divine truth. For no true christian can act otherwise. Urbicius, ordering him to be led to execution, one Lucius, himself a christian, observing the absurdity of these proceedings, expostulated with Urbicius on the iniquity of putting men to death merely for a name, abstracted from any one specific charge of guilt, a conduct unworthy of emperors such as Pius the last, or Philosophus the present, or the sacred Senate. You too seem to me to be of the same sect, was all that the prefect deigned to reply. Lucius confessed that he was, and was himself led also to execution, which he bore with triumphant serenity, declaring that he was now going from unrighteous governors to God his gracious Father and King. A third person was sentenced also to death, on the same occasion. And I also, continues Justin, expect by persons of this sort to be murdered, perhaps by Crescens the pretended philosopher. For the name really be-

longs not to a man who publicly accuses christians of atheism and impiety, to please many deceived persons, though he is totally ignorant of their real character. I myself have interrogated him, and proved that he is quite unacquainted with the subject. I am willing to undergo an examination before you in company with him. And if my questions and his answers were known, it would appear evident to yourself that he knows nothing of our affairs, or at least conceals what he does know."

Thus did this noble champion of the cross advance to the front of the combat with imperial Rome. Thus did he, animated by the hope of delivering the church, bare his bosom to the very choice thunderbolts of persecution.

Marcus was not a man to exercise common justice toward christians.—The philosophic garb was no shield to Justin, even in the eyes of an emperor, who piqued himself on the surname of philosopher. The sincerity of his christian attachment outweighed every argument and every plausible appearance in his favor. Crescens procured his imprisonment for the crime of being a christian, the greatest evil of which a human being could be guilty in the eyes of this emperor. The acts of his Martyrdom give this account. "He and six of his companions having been apprehended, were brought before Rusticus the prefect, who I suppose had succeeded Urbicius, a man famous for his attachment to stoicism, and a person of considerable eminence. He had been tutor to the emperor, who acknowledges in the First Book of his Meditations, his obligations to him on several accounts, and particularly for his teaching him to be of a placable and forgiving temper. An instance, one among thousands, that it is possible for a man to be strongly impressed with many beautiful ideas of mortality, and still to remain an inflexible

enemy to the Gospel. Rusticus undertook to persuade Justin to obey the Gods and obey the emperor's edicts. He defended the reasonableness of his religion, upon which the Governor enquired in what kind of learning and discipline he had been educated. He told him that he had endeavored to understand all kinds of discipline, and tried all methods of learning, but finding satisfaction in none of them, he at last had found rest in the Christian doctrine, however fashionable it might be to despise it. Wretch! replies the indignant magistrate, art thou captivated then by that religion? I am, says Justin, I follow the christians, and their doctrine is right. What is their doctrine? It is this, we believe the one only God to be the Creator of all things visible and invisible, and confess our lord Jesus Christ to be the Son of God, foretold by the prophets of old, and who shall hereafter appear the Judge of mankind, a Saviour, teacher, and master to all those who are duly instructed by him. As for myself, I am too mean to be able to say any thing becoming his infinite Deity; this was the business of the prophets, who many ages ago had foretold the coming of the Son of God into the world. Where do the christians usually assemble? The God of the christians is not confined to any particular place. In what place do you instruct your scholars? Justin mentioned the place in which he dwelt, and told him that there he explained christianity to all who resorted to him. The prefect having severally examined his companions, again addressed Justin. Hear thou who hast the character of an orator, and imaginest thyself to be in possession of truth. If I scourge thee from head to foot thinkest thou that thou shalt go to Heaven? Although I suffer what you threaten, yet I expect to enjoy the portion of all true christians, as I know that the divine

grace and favor is laid up for all such, and shall be so, while the world endures. Do you think that you shall go to heaven and receive a reward? I not only think so, but I know it, and have a certainty of it which excludes all doubt. Rusticus insisted that they should all go together and sacrifice to the gods. No man whose understanding is sound, replies Justin, will desert true religion, for the sake of error and impiety. Unless you comply you shall be tormented without mercy. We desire nothing more sincerely than to endure tortures for our Lord Jesus Christ, and be saved. Hence our happiness is promoted and we shall have confidence before the awful tribunal of our Lord and Saviour, before which, by the divine appointment, the whole world must appear. The rest assented—Dispatch quickly your purpose, we are christians, and cannot sacrifice to idols.—The Governor then pronounced sentence. As to those who refuse to sacrifice to the gods and to obey the imperial edicts, let them be first scourged, and then beheaded according to the laws. The Martyrs rejoiced and blessed God, and being led back to prison, were whipped and afterwards beheaded. The dead bodies were taken by christian friends and decently interred."

Thus slept in Jesus the christian philosopher Justin, about the year 163, and about the third or fourth year of the reign of Marcus.

THE LITTLE SHEPHERD BOY.

ONCE more I quit my winter bow'r,
And hasten pleas'd away,
While sweet content crowns ev'ry
hour,
And brightens all the day.
Onward I trip with cheerful speed
To yonder smiling plain,
And whistling with my tuneful reed,
I call my fleecy train.

My little dog, how willing he
Runs all the country o'er,
Performs his duty faithfully,
And then trips on before.
Soon as the cheering sun is up,
The tuneful lark begins;
Well pleas'd to hear, I gladly stop,
To listen while he sings.
All nature's works, with one accord,
Some grateful tribute pay;
And fain would I adore the Lord,
And louder sing than they.
Oft am I fill'd with peace and joy;
How good the Lord's to me!
O! do then bless a *Shepherd Boy*,
Who wants to sing of thee.
Where'er I turn my raptur'd eyes,
How charming is the scene!
Mountains aspiring to the skies,
And vallies cloth'd in green!
Thou feedest all my numerous flock,
Extend thy care to me;
They drink the cooling water brook;
But give me drink from thee!
Each morn I call them out to feed
Beside the sparkling rills;
But feed my soul with food indeed
From the eternal hills!
Oft, as oppress'd with sleep I lie,
With pining hunger bold
A prowling enemy comes by,
And robs my little fold.
But thou, great SHEPHERD, canst not
sleep,
Nor drowsy be like me;
So that no foe can steal a sheep
Eternally from thee.
Then let my humble voice resound,
To thee my strains belong,
So shall the vallies catch the sound,
And echo back the song.
And oft as this is my employ,
Jesus shall be my theme;
He died to save a *Shepherd Boy*,
And I will sing of him.

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